PROJECT ANALYSIS

The BZO requires that a Conceptual Development Plan to show the following information:

- 1. Proposed land uses.
- 2. Location of buildings, structures and building groups.
- 3. A tabulation of proposed dwelling unit density in residential areas.
- 4. A tabulation of floor area ratios and the maximum heights of proposed buildings.
- 5. Proposed circulation systems, including preliminary street cross sections.
- 6. Proposed parks, playgrounds, school sites and other open spaces.
- 7. Location and type of existing and proposed landscaping (Identification of any existing trees to be removed, in accordance with Ordinance No. 424).
- 8. An economic feasibility analysis of proposed commercial uses.
- 9. Delineation of the major units within the development to be constructed in progression.
- 10. Relation to future land use in surrounding area as proposed in the General Plan.
- 11. Proposed off-street parking.

The following sections establish the applicant's proposal for conceptual development. The Charles Armstrong Campus Plan is a document provided by the applicant that describes the operation of the school (see Attachment 4). As well, Attachments 7, 8, and 12 contribute to the proposed plan.

Proposed land use

This proposal is to continue operation of a private school. The existing land uses associated with operation of the school would continue with the proposal; the applicant requests approval to allow construction of new campus facilities and redistribution of the existing school uses into new and existing structures on the campus.

The existing school campus has nineteen classrooms and instructional facilities including science lab, art center, multi-media library, counseling/ student center, and music instruction areas. The existing multi-purpose building is used for dance movement instruction, assemblies, faculty lounge, and a kitchen.

This project would allow construction a 900 square foot addition to the existing multi-purpose building for an entry lobby and construction of a 14,700 square foot activity center building with three classrooms, a regulation size basketball court (50' x 85' x 27') with restrooms and lockers, a lobby, a kitchen and a covered patio for lunchtime seating and outdoor activities. The school does not provide

cafeteria service for the students; the children either bring lunches or order catered sack lunches, which are currently eaten in their classroom. The applicant describes the kitchen in the Activity Center as an area for snack and concessions preparation.

The school year includes regular classes from September to mid-June (at full capacity) and summer session during July (at half capacity). Normal operating hours are 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, which includes morning and after school care. Additionally the school uses include administration, adult educational activities, special events and school ceremonies. The nature of the existing uses are similar to the proposed uses in that there are minor differences increasing and decreasing the activities of the school (Attachment 12 is a table of all activities at the campus).

Location of buildings, structures and building groups

The Conceptual Development Plan includes a project plan set which indicates building locations on the campus and building groups. This proposal would not affect the existing three long narrow buildings of the school. First, the existing multi-purpose building would be expanded forward to construct a 900 square foot entry lobby, set back 40 feet from the front property line and 45 feet from the western side line. Second, the project would include a 14,700 square foot activity center placed 25 feet from the rear property line, 156 feet from the eastern side property line and 80 feet from the western side abutting the city park. Third, there are ten accessory storage structures (Tuff Shed or equivalent) around the campus for storage of P.E. equipment, emergency supplies for the campus, archive/ document storage, art supplies, school supplies, a Student Council Shed (sell snacks for campus fund raiser), and campus maintenance equipment; half of these sheds would be removed as the stored materials would be redistributed in proposed campus buildings. Finally, the project would construct and install various minor structures (reconfigure playground equipment, steps, ramps, sidewalks, and retaining walls) in order to accommodate the campus uses.

A tabulation of proposed dwelling unit density in residential areas

This factor is not applicable because there are no dwelling units or residential areas proposed in this project.

A tabulation of floor area ratios and the maximum heights of proposed buildings

					Total
	Building	Existing	Prop	osed	Building
	Area	Subtotals	Sub	totals	Area
Existing Buildings:					
Building A	6,750				
Building B	6,750				
Building C	7,200				
Multi-Purpose Building:					
Upper Level	7,040	29,540			
Lower Level	1,800				
Proposed Activity Center	14,700		15,600		
Proposed Lobby Addition - Multi-Purpose Bld.	900				45,140
Property size	213,880	Existing F. 0.138			osed FAR 0.211

During the Preliminary Design Review the Commission requested that a Gymnasium comparison be prepared in order to put the proposal into context. See Attachment 13 for the comparison of gymnasium building size, building height, occupancy.

Proposed circulation systems, including preliminary street cross sections

The project proposes only minor adjustments to the existing approve circulation plan including a relocation of the roadway in through the campus for emergency access and for student loading. As noted earlier, the existing circulation system includes two driveway approaches to the campus that accommodate three primary user groups of the campus: 1) employees who utilize the three parking areas during school operation, 2) persons transporting the students before and after school, and 3) public park users. The circulation systems for the first and second group were assessed in 2002 when the Commission considered the Conditional Use Permit and amendment to the Detailed Development Plan for an increase in student population. The following condition addresses these groups:

Student Loading Policy (Adopted 2002):

Morning drop-off for the school begins at 7:30 am until the start of school at 8:30 am. Between 7:30 and 8:00 am approximately four to ten students participate in a supervised morning care program located in the School's library. The remainder of the students arrive between 8:00 and 8:30 am. School staff has assigned a traffic director to direct school traffic off of Solana Drive and down to the lower parking lot. A second traffic director, in the parking lot, opens the car door and assists the student out of the vehicle. Once the student is safely away from the vehicle the

vehicle driver is directed out of the lot and back out of the campus and off of the neighborhood streets as quickly as possible.

Afternoon pick-up includes staggered class dismissal times. Grades 2 to 5 are dismissed at 3:00 pm and grades 6 to 8 are dismissed at 3:15 pm. Drivers begin arriving at approximately 2:45 pm where a staff person directs pick-up traffic to the lower driveway and into the schoolyard. Large vehicles [vans, busses, etc.] proceed to the top of the lower schoolyard to await their student passengers while all other vehicles park on the lower yard. At a designated time all vehicles are halted and the students are allowed to go to their vehicle. Homeroom teachers accompany their students to the lower schoolyard and when the first group of students are safely in their vehicles, student movement is halted and the loaded vehicles are directed out of the lot. There are at least six traffic directors managing the pedestrian and vehicle traffic movement at all times. It takes approximately five minutes to complete each pick-up period.

The vehicular queuing for the morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up is currently in the lower parking area and around the lower ball court of the blacktop area (page 4 of the project plan, Attachment 16). The proposed on site circulation would continue morning drop-off within the lower parking lot and shift afternoon pick-up through the campus, past the proposed activity center and around the emergency vehicle accessible vehicle turnaround as indicated on page 5 of the project plan (Attachment 16).

The third group of campus users, the public park users have access through the school via the recorded access agreement described in detail on page 16 of this report (see attachment 4 - A.1). Charles Armstrong School also indicates that the public would continue to have additional access to the informal parking along the lower blacktop court.

Proposed parks, playgrounds, school sites and other open spaces

This CDP item generally pertains to large subdivisions with varied land uses rather than the subject assessment of an existing school site. This proposal would add one playground with fixed play equipment in the rear southeast corner of the campus. The new playground equipment would be located at the center of the proposed emergency vehicle turnaround, adjacent to the lower buildings and the proposed activity center classrooms. The campus plan further proposes to maintain the existing playground adjacent to the east end of the middle building, sections of the existing asphalt ball courts, and pursuant to the recorded access agreement, (described in detail on page 16 of this report - see Attachment 4 - A.1), the play fields of the park and playground are reserved for use by the school during school hours. As noted earlier, the school has an existing access agreement for use of McDougal Park during school hours. Use of the park will continue without change.

Location and type of existing and proposed landscaping

Moving clockwise through the campus, the CDP includes re-engineering of the front parking lot and front landscaped slopes to include the planting of new olive trees, oleander shrubs and protection of existing oaks and pine trees; the landscape plantings will be drought tolerant, deer resistant and will act as a landscape screen for the parking area below. Along the east side of the property the existing native oak and pine trees will remain and be augmented with an under planting of native shrubs and grasses. An olive grove with drought tolerant grasses would be planted at the rear southeast corner of the property. Behind the proposed activity center, a row of oaks, pines and native shrubs are proposed. At the front of the activity center building, shade tree plantings are proposed, which would be echoed on the other side of the access driveway, adjacent to the southernmost buildings. Between the three school buildings the applicant would plant drought tolerant ground covers and decorative plantings. The existing lower parking area is and will continue to be landscaped with drought tolerant ground covers, shrubs and trees. The front of the multi-purpose building would be planted with drought tolerant/deer resistant ground covers and screening trees. The landscape plan is found on page L1.1 of the project plan (Attachment 16).

An economic feasibility analysis of proposed commercial uses

Not applicable to a not for profit institutional use.

Delineation of the major units within the development to be constructed in progression

The applicant proposes three phases to the campus improvements. The timing for construction of these phases would depend on issuance of entitlements from the city and the fund raising efforts of the school.

Phase 1 – Construct the Activity Center

Phase 2 – Construct the Entry Lobby on Multi-Purpose Building

Phase 3 – Incremental tenant improvements to existing buildings

Graphic representation of the conceptual phasing is found in the plan set, Attachment 16.

Relation to future land use in surrounding area as proposed in the General Plan

The Belmont General Plan indicates the subject school site as surrounded by a fully developed single-family residential neighborhood and the jurisdictional line of the City of San Carlos. There are no proposed changes to the land uses proposed in the Belmont General Plan.

Staff asked the City of San Carlos planning staff if the San Carlos General Plan anticipated any change to the existing residential and school land uses adjacent to the subject school property and they answered that there are no proposed changes. A single-family residential neighborhood and school exist on the San Carlos side of the subject property.

Proposed off-street parking

Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants analyzed the parking layout for Charles Armstrong School in 2001, when the increase in student population was considered. The Belmont Zoning Ordinance, Section 8.4.6.i requires that the number of parking spaces required for elementary/ intermediate schools, public or private, be one space per employee. The results of the Fehr & Peers report have been incorporated in the following analysis.

The parking demand is not set to increase due to the adopted limit on the student body population (maximum of 260). The facility has sixteen administrative employees and forty-four educational employees, yielding a requirement for sixty parking spaces¹. The site includes seventy parking spaces in compliance to the recommendations of the traffic study, prepared by Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants. The site has three separate parking areas accessed by two driveways off of Solana Drive. The upper parking area, visible from Solana Drive has forty-one parking spaces. A second driveway from Solana Drive provides access past the multipurpose building to the lower parking area, McDougal Park (discussion about the access agreement between the City park and the private school to be found on page 16 of this report), and the school's two blacktop play areas. There would be two parking places near the multi-purpose building and twenty-seven spaces in the lower parking lot and the rear blacktop areas are used as informal parking for large gatherings and for the student drop-off and afternoon pickup.

CDP AMENDMENT ANALYSIS & GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The only required finding for the CDP amendment is the determination that "...the change in the district boundaries or of the district regulations is required to achieve the objectives of the Zoning Plan and the General Plan for the City" (BZO Section 16.7). Staff notes that there is no Zoning Plan; however, the Zoning Code contains a purpose statement (Section 1.1) that represents the objectives of the City's zoning regulations:

1.1 PURPOSE – The following regulations for the zoning of land within the City are hereby adopted to promote and protect the public health, safety, peace, comfort, convenience and general welfare, and to provide a precise guide for the physical development of the City.

Several of the goals and policies of the Belmont General Plan must be considered in light of this proposal. The Commission must determine that such goals and objectives are achieved by the proposed CDP amendment.

GENERAL COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

Section 8.4.6.i of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance requires that schools (nursery, elementary and intermediate – public or private) require one parking space for each employee.

Goals

Goal 1015.1 - To assure that Belmont will be a balanced community with residences, schools, business, industry, and space and facilities for social, recreational and cultural activities in keeping with the present character of the City.

A school is on equal footing with other types of uses that are desired in a balanced community. The goal does not distinguish between public and private schools nor say how they are to be balanced with other uses in defining the general character or makeup of the community. Belmont can be characterized as a traditional residential suburb where schools are designed to be in reasonable proximity to residential uses. The proposed project is a reasonable expansion of the existing school facilities while continuing the school use for the site.

Goal 1015.2 - To preserve and enhance the attractive, family-oriented and tranquil quality of Belmont's residential neighborhoods.

The school facilities expansion project has the potential to adversely affect the generally quiet nature of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Inherent in the design and operation of the expanded facilities will be some noise impacts to surrounding uses. These impacts may jeopardize the neighbors' perception and expectation of a serene residential setting. The project was designed to shift the proposed new buildings as far from north and eastern Belmont residences, and from south and western residences (located in San Carlos) as possible without interfering with the circulation pattern for the school.

The new activity center will shift some existing outdoor noise generating activities indoors, reducing the ambient noise levels. However, the activity center will introduce a new source of noise along the southern boundary of the site. Through adherence to mitigation measures associated with the design of the new activity center: 1) maintaining fixed windows on the south side of the building and operable windows on the north, west, and east sides, 2) automatically closing doors, and 3) venting of mechanical equipment on the north side of the building, noise impacts will be reduced to less than significant levels. Thus, the proposed school facilities expansion can generally coexist without significantly disturbing neighboring uses, since the project will be conditioned through performance standards and adherence to mitigation measures required in the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Goal 1015.3 - To preserve significant open spaces, trees, views, waterways, wildlife habitats, and other features of the natural environment.

The natural environment of the project site consists of the upper slopes of the south and western edge of the property. The proposed project will be constructed within the existing parking and outdoor activity area (asphalt parking lot). The project has been designed to preserve trees and open space along the perimeter areas of this portion of the property. As determined in the project initial study, no views, waterways, wildlife habitats, or natural environmental features of the site (i.e. south and western open space areas) would be significantly impacted by the proposal.

Goal 1015.4 - To maintain and enhance the appearance of the City through controlling the location, timing, design and landscaping of new development and encouraging renovation of older areas.

The proposed CDP amendment will allow expansion of existing school facilities, while the evaluation of design and landscaping associated with a project will be formally addressed at the Detailed Development Plan stage. The project includes a variety of minor renovations throughout the site.

Goal 1015.10 - To provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the community and between the community and other areas of the region with a minimum of disruption and adverse environmental effects.

Within the project site, adequate ingress/egress and traffic circulation for both students/faculty/visitors and emergency services is provided. Access to the site from the Chula Vista Drive/Ralston Avenue intersection often results in significant levels of traffic delay causing disruption in the movement of goods and people within the community. The project Initial Study (and corresponding traffic/circulation analysis) recommends implementation of a parking management plan to ensure efficient use of the project site's lower schoolyard area for parking, restrictions of on-street parking, and continued use of traffic flow controls through regulation of pick-up and drop-off activities at the campus. Incorporating these mitigation measures as part of the project would thus not further exacerbate existing adverse traffic conditions on surrounding street intersections of the project site.

Policies

Policy 1016.1 New development should be of a scale and character compatible with surrounding land uses and Belmont's small city environment.

The project poses the problem of determining the appropriate size for a school given the surrounding residential area. What is meant by a "small city environment" in light of the need for provision of schools (either public or private) for the community? What is acceptable "scale" and "character"? It seems that schools by their nature will be larger in scale and busier in character than the surrounding single family neighborhood, yet not seen as incompatible.

From a site planning perspective, the project generally provides sufficient area to accommodate the proposed school facility expansion, parking, setbacks and landscaping and open space. The project does not appear to overwhelm site. Furthermore, the school facilities expansion includes no non-school use.

Policy 1016.2 - Intensity of use of land as measured by such factors as parcel size, population density, building coverage, extent of impervious surfaces, public service requirement parking requirements, and traffic movements should be based on the following general principles:

a. Intensity of land use should decrease as steepness of terrain and distance from major thoroughfares increase.

- b. The lowest intensities of use should occur on the steep hillsides to limit storm runoff, prevent increased erosion, avoid unstable slopes, protect vegetation and watersheds and maintain scenic qualities.
- c. Intensity of use of individual parcels and buildings should be governed by considerations of existing development patterns, water and air quality, accessibility, traffic generation, parking, noise, fire safety, drainage, natural hazards, resource conservation and aesthetics.
- d. Intensity of land use should be regulated according to the availability of community facilities and services.

The project does not entail construction on steep slopes, as the expansion would be located on a relatively flat portion of the subject site. The project site is located approximately 1/2 mile from Ralston Avenue – about the same distance as Cipriani Elementary School, but further than most any other higher traffic use in the city. Adequate ingress/egress and traffic circulation for both students/faculty/visitors and emergency services is provided within the project site.

The project would be required to meet regional water and air quality requirements. The project meets required parking per the Zoning Code (based on number of school employees). The project will be required to meet current UBC and Fire codes which regulate new construction to address protection from natural hazards. The project will generally improve the aesthetics of existing buildings and will not diminish resource conservation. The project will not impact community facilities and all utility providers can adequately serve the site. Although the project will generate noise impacts to the surrounding residences, the project Initial Study indicates that this factor can be reduced to a less than significant level through mitigation measures for the project.

Policy 1016.3 - All land uses should conform with the environmental quality and safety policies in Part 3 of this plan.

Discussed under Noise, Seismic Safety, and Open Space Goals and Policies Sections of the General Plan (see further in report).

Policy 1016.4 – The following standards shall apply to all new development:

- a. Sewage disposal shall be by sanitary sewers.
- b. Storm drainage facilities shall be provided.
- c. Erosion shall be minimized through such measures as runoff retention and revegetation.
- d. Grading and new impervious surfaces shall be kept to the minimum necessary to permit development of land in a manner compatible with its characteristics and designated use.
- e. Land, water and energy shall be used efficiently.
- f. Structures shall be clustered, where possible, to maximize open space and minimize costs of providing public services.
- g. Safe access to the public road system of the community shall be provided.
- *h. Fire and police protection shall be adequately provided.*
- i. Slopes exceeding 30 percent shall be avoided whenever possible.

The project has been designed to meet the above the development standards. All utility services can serve the site and adequate emergency services (police and fire protection) can be provided for the project. The project does not entail significant grading as it is proposed on a relatively flat portion (less than 10% slope) of the site. Adherence to erosion control and air quality measures will be required and incorporated for the project.

Policy 1016.5 - In the more intensely developed and accessible portions of the City, land use should be varied with creative mixing of businesses, professional offices, institutions, and residences.

The project consists of expansion of current school facilities while continuing a school use for the site. While the neighborhood is not considered "intensely developed", the mix of homes and a school is as varied as a typical suburban residential neighborhood is likely to become.

Policy 1016.6 - Natural features, such as ridgelines, canyons, steep hillsides, meadows, streamsides and significant stands of trees, should be preserved and protected through planning, conservation practices and, where appropriate, the dedication of open space or scenic easements.

The project does not entail construction within the south and western slopes of the subject property. These existing landscaped and open space areas would be preserved and augmented with additional landscape plantings to screen the proposed activity center building from adjacent residential land uses.

Policy 1016.8 - In any development within the Planning Area, geologic conditions should be thoroughly evaluated to avoid or mitigate problems of unstable land.

A geotechnical report (including the assessment of the geological site conditions) has been prepared for the project. The findings of this report have been evaluated and included as part of the Initial Study for the project. The environmental study concluded that should the design and recommendations of the applicant's geotechnical study and City's third party consultant (Cotton & Shires) be included for the project, issues related to site stability would be mitigated to less than significant levels.

Policy 1016.9 - In all new development, significant historical and archaeological features should be identified and, as determined appropriate, protected or conserved.

No significant archaeological features or historically significant buildings have been identified for the site. As such, the project does involve either the demolition or preservation of any historical buildings for the school.

Policy 1016.10 - Through traffic should be channeled onto major streets and collectors and diverted, to the extent possible, from residential neighborhoods.

A nearby residential street intersection (Chula Vista/Ralston) currently experiences significant levels of traffic delay. No significant public capital improvements are anticipated to modify the street pattern for

the residential areas surrounding the school. The incorporation of on-site traffic/circulation mitigation measures for the project will avoid any increase in adverse traffic conditions on surrounding streets.

Policy 1016.11 - On-street parking should be controlled by requiring provision of off-street parking in new development, construction of additional off-street parking spaces, especially in the Central Business District and near Old County Road, preventing the conversion of space or uses to higher intensities unless adequate off-street parking is provided.

The project includes site layout modifications to maintain formally recognized (striped) parking spaces for the school (70 spaces). Such spaces meet required parking per the Zoning Code of 60 spaces, based on number of school employees.

Policy 1016.12 - Incompatible land uses should be separated by landscaped open spaces, streets or other forms of buffers.

Schools are typically identified as a compatible land use in residential neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the project includes landscape buffers (additional tree plantings) along the south and western perimeter (upper slopes) of the project site to screen the proposed school facilities buildings from adjacent residential land uses